

The Library Assistant:

The Official Journal of the Association of Assistant Librarians.

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Published Monthly

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EDITORIALS.

The New Officers and Councillors.—We should like to give one word of welcome to the new Officers of the Association as well as to those who have just joined the Council for the first time. The new President, Mr. W. H. Parker, is well-known to most of us ; he has done long and useful work for the Association both as a Councillor and as the Vice-President, and there is no doubt but that he will maintain the high tradition associated with the office. Mr. I. Briggs, who occupies the Vice-Presidency, has done yeoman service in the north-eastern area. For many years he has occupied the secretaryship of the North-Eastern Division ; at times his work has been very difficult, but he has stuck to it tenaciously, with the result that the Division is now firmly established and more active than ever before. We are sorry to learn as we go to press that Mr. Briggs is in ill-health, and hope that the period of rest which he is undergoing will restore to him a full measure of health. For ourselves, we appreciate the honour of being the first Honorary Editor to be vested with the dignity of an officer elected by the whole Association as distinct from the former practice of being appointed by the Council. The various expressions of confidence in our efforts are more than sufficient to inspire us for another year of service.

The Tragedy of Cork.—We note from the "Cork Examiner" that efforts are being made to find a site for a reading room. The writer of the article questions whether the Cork Corporation are really in earnest in the matter. For our part the absence of energy on the Council's part to re-establish the library which was burnt out some years ago is deplorable. The Carnegie Trust threatened to withdraw its support unless the matter is attended to soon.

Rural Libraries.—The Harrow centre in the Middlesex scheme was opened early in May with a stock of 1,000 volumes, which is to be changed every six months. Derbyshire is also making a move, and already the Carnegie Trust have intimated their intention of making a grant. Derbyshire, with its mining and agricultural localities, promises to be an interesting problem for the organiser of the scheme. Worcestershire is advertising for a librarian at £300 a year.

Westminster.—We understand that the legality of the Council's appropriation of the St. Martin's Lane Library is shortly to be tested in the courts. We await the result with keen interest. It is likely to prove the most important library case for many years.

Glasgow Memorials.—The Mitchell Library, Glasgow, was the scene of a very interesting ceremony on the 14th June, when the Lord Provost unveiled a bronze medallion portrait of the late Francis Thornton Barrett, LL.D. The portrait is placed on the wall of the north corridor of the library and bears an inscription stating that it has been erected by the Corporation "in appreciation of his distinguished services in initiating and developing public libraries throughout the city," and recording that he was the first librarian of the Mitchell library and held the position of city librarian from 1901 to 1915. Professor Rait, in the course of a speech, paid tribute to Dr. Barrett's long struggle against opposition and the final success which saw the establishment of the great system of Glasgow libraries.

Prior to the ceremony, Councillor M'Cowan unveiled a simple brass plate to the memory of the members of the libraries' staff who fell in the war. It records the names of those who fell and is situated behind the service counter.

The Scottish Library Association.—From the report of the Scottish Library Association before us it appears that Scotland has a very much alive Association. The most successful of all its activities is the "Autumn Course of Lectures on Library Practice," which we hope is now a firmly-established event. There were 80 enrolments last year, representing 17 separate library systems, and the total cost was only £16 12s. 6d.!

Irish Library Conference.—In our next number we hope to give some account of the Conference of Irish Librarians and Assistants which was held in Dublin from the 26th to the 29th of June. The Conference was arranged by a committee of Irish Librarians acting in conjunction with the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust. A very interesting programme was arranged; papers were read by Mr. F. Pacy (Honorary Secretary of the Library Association), by Mr. Duncan Gray, Mr. Alexander Strain of Glasgow, as well as by Irish Librarians and men of letters, including one on "The need for an Association of

Irish Librarians." As we said in a previous issue, this activity in the Irish library world is very gratifying. May we suggest to our Irish readers that the time has come for the revival of the Irish Division of the A.A.L.?

Open Access.—The Lowestoft Public Library, which was closed for re-organisation, has now been re-opened, with the lending department converted to "open access." In the newspaper report before us little mention is made of the labours of the librarian in connection with the conversion, although unnecessary prominence is given to all sorts of other people. Another branch library at Dundee has also been converted following on the experiences at the Arthurstone branch, which was re-organised some time ago.

A Graceful Thought.—It is not often that one comes across such thoughtfulness for others as is expressed in the preface to Sir Frederick Pollock's recently published "Essays in the Law," in which he says that "References to the places of original publication (a thing I have often missed in other works) are given throughout, for the convenience of cataloguers and bibliographers, whose deserving labours are not yet sufficiently recognized and assisted in the world of letters." We are grateful to Sir Frederick for his thoughtfulness.

Our Next Issue.—The next number of *The Library Assistant* will appear on the 1st of September. Meanwhile, in hoping that all our readers will have very pleasant holidays, may we once again remind them that our colleagues in the country and at the seaside resorts do not have the facilities for social intercourse that some of us enjoy. It would be appreciated, therefore, if our readers would bear this fact in mind and "look up" the local library where they may be visiting.

The A.A.L. Afloat.—The afternoon outings in connection with the monthly meetings of the Association are becoming distinctly popular, and the numbers joining in those held lately in S.E. London have surpassed all previous records. Over a hundred members and friends enjoyed the visit to the T.S.S. "Largs Bay" of the Commonwealth Government Line of Steamers, berthed in King George's Dock, North Woolwich, on June 20th, in connection with the Annual Meeting. At North Woolwich Station representatives of the Company were ready to conduct the party to the boat, where they met with a most courteous and genial reception. In the saloon, a very substantial "afternoon tea" was provided by the management, and subsequent visit to storeroom and galley showed it representative of the generous scale on which the commissariat department is administrated on the liners.

The ideal of a one-class boat permitting the passengers to have the run of the whole ship was explained in humorous fashion. Exceeding steadiness was claimed for all boats on the Commonwealth

Line—a point not unworthy of consideration by intending voyagers, if not always entirely to the profit of the Company. Under the guidance of the ship's officers, the visitors made the tour in small parties, noting the cosy yet airy cabins, the music and smoking rooms, the wireless station, and the general air of comfort and efficiency. On occasion, the land-lubbers 'found' themselves at sea even in dock, but that only added to the interest of a thoroughly enjoyable and thoroughly enjoyed afternoon. We know why no vote of thanks to express this was desired—the Company do not need to be told that everything on the "Largs Bay" is A1 at Lloyd's.

The Annual Business Meeting.—The annual business meeting was held in the evening of the same day at Shoreditch, by the kind permission of Mr. Wm. C. Plant, and the attendance was very gratifying. The minutes of the 27th meeting were read and confirmed. In the unavoidable absence of Mr. E. C. Wickens, the Chair was occupied by Mr. W. Benson Thorne, who moved the adoption of the Annual Report as printed in our last number. This was seconded by Mr. Gurner P. Jones and carried unanimously. It was interesting to hear from Mr. Webb, of Brighton, some of the difficulties under which the Divisions are labouring, and the wonder is that they are able to maintain the measure of enthusiasm that is maintained in them. The balance sheet was approved on the recommendation of Mr. Cooper, who was warmly congratulated upon his administration of the Association's finances during his first year of office. The results of the ballot for Officers and Council and on Mr. Bullen's motion for retaining the present title of *The Library Assistant* were as follows:—

President : Mr. W. H. PARKER, Hackney Public Libraries.

Vice-President : Mr. I. BRIGGS, Newcastle Public Libraries.

Honorary Treasurer : Mr. R. COOPER, Battersea Public Libraries.

Honorary Editor : Mr. H. A. SHARP, Croydon Public Libraries.

Honorary Secretary : Mr. GURNER P. JONES, B.A., Stepney Public Libraries.

COUNCIL.

DIVISIONAL REPRESENTATIVES.

Midland : Mr. L. CHUBB, Birmingham.

North-Eastern : Mr. W. H. SMETTEM, Sunderland.

North-Western : Mr. J. T. EVANS, Liverpool.

South Coast : Miss E. GERARD, Worthing.

Yorkshire : Mr. HORACE GOULDEN, Huddersfield.

LONDON.

Thorne, W. B., Poplar	204	Cross, H., Croydon	134
Bullen, R. F., Poplar	155	Cummins, A. E., Chemical	
Sandry, F. E., West Ham	154	Society	121
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Muskett, T. W., Bethnal Green	88	Exley, Miss E. M., Woolwich	78
		Tupman, Miss M. W., Islington	78

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Webb, A., Brighton ...	75		

Not Elected.

Procter, W., Leeds ...	61	Morgan, W., Cardiff ...	46
Treliving, N., Leeds ...	60	Woodbine, H., Birmingham ...	44
Weston, Miss E., Birmingham	60	Sidwell, J., Coventry ...	41
Strother, G. W., Leeds ...	59	Waites, H. E., Watford ...	40
Patrick, F. J., Birmingham ...	57	Higgs, R. W., Southend ...	31
Cochran, R., Liverpool ...	52		

Mr. R. Bullen's motion "That the Resolution, passed at the last Annual Meeting, to change the title of the Association's Journal to 'The Assistant Librarian' be rescinded, and that the present title, 'The Library Assistant,' be retained." For: 131; Against: 101.

Mr. Parker delivered an interesting and stimulating address, which is printed on another page. May we draw special attention to the effort that is to be made to increase the membership of the Association to 1,000. This is an ambitious ideal, but if every member will bear a hand, it is not an impossible one.

Library Association Council Election, 1923.—Members of the A.A.L. who are also members of the Library Association are urged to vote, without fail, for the following candidates. Last year, of the ten candidates for whose support we asked, only two failed to gain election. Perhaps this year even this excellent result will be improved upon.

FOR THE LONDON COUNCIL.

- B. M. Headicar, London School of Economics.
- J. F. Hogg, Battersea Public Libraries.
- Gurner P. Jones, Hon. Secretary, A.A.L.
- J. D. Stewart, Bermondsey Public Libraries.
- Wm. Benson Thorne, Poplar Public Libraries.
- G. F. Vale, Bethnal Green Public Library.
- J. E. Walker, Fulham Public Libraries.

FOR THE COUNTRY COUNCIL.

- G. R. Bolton, Watford Public Library.
- W. A. Briscoe, Nottingham Public Libraries.
- H. M. Cashmore, Birmingham Public Libraries.
- George E. Roebuck, Walthamstow Public Libraries.
- H. D. Roberts, Brighton Public Library.
- W. C. Berwick Sayers, Croydon Public Libraries.
- Henry A. Sharp, Hon. Editor, "Library Assistant."
- G. A. Stephen, Norwich Public Library.

Exeter.—With the assistance of the Carnegie U.K. Trust it is proposed to erect a new library for Exeter, costing some £80,000. A certain proportion of the cost will have to be borne by the citizens, but for all that we sincerely hope that the city council will not miss this opportunity of securing a vastly improved library service when such generous help is forthcoming from the Carnegie Trustees.

Advocates Library.—Scotland hitherto has been without a national library, but there is now the possibility that this will be remedied, since the Faculty of Advocates has expressed its willingness to hand over the library to the nation under certain conditions. We understand that a national endowment trust has already been formed.

John Woolman.—Another well-known figure in the library world has passed over, in the person of Mr. John Woolman, who was librarian of Watford from 1885 to 1919. Originally a journalist, Mr. Woolman entered the library profession as librarian of Watford on the resignation of Mr. E. Boor. He was also closely concerned with the work of the Watford School of Art, Science and Commerce, of which institution he became Director and Secretary in 1919 on his resignation of the post of librarian.

Examinations.—Doubts are still expressed in a few quarters as to the value of professional examinations, but judging from the fact that no fewer than 676 candidates entered for the May Examinations of the Library Association, the number of objectors must now be *very* few. At the moment of going to press we do not know whether the passes or the failures are in the majority, but we *do* know that there is a very thorough tightening up of the examination machinery, and that the time has gone by when one can "grind" for a month and have hopes of passing. Candidates who adopt this foolish practice are likely in the future to find it both expensive and disastrous.

The "Record," No. 2.—The second number of *The Library Association Record* in its new form has just reached us. It maintains the same standard of excellence as the first number, and while much of the matter is, of necessity, purely of a "record" nature, it is presented in an interesting and readable form. Professor Richardson's paper on "Library Architecture" should be useful to students of library planning, and students of bibliography are well catered for by Mr. Harry Sellers' "Working Shakespeare Bibliography." Some very important legal questions are asked and answered in the "Notes and Queries" column; they will repay a perusal by those who have passed as well as by those who hope to pass in "Library Legislation."

Library Association Conference.—May we again remind London and southern assistants generally that the Library Association Conference is being held at Eastbourne from the 17th to the 21st of September? We hope that all who possibly *can* will endeavour to get to at least some of the meetings.

The Southwark Meeting.—The May meeting of the Association was held on Wednesday, May 23rd, at the Southwark Central Library. The 40 members and friends who were present were received by Mr. R. W. Mould, the Borough Librarian, and his Staff, who conducted the party round the library (one of the earliest established public libraries in London), and invited them to partake of light refreshments in the Town Hall adjoining. At the meeting, which was held in the Children's library, Mr. Mould occupied the chair and extended a very warm welcome to the Association. Two auditors, Messrs. Toole and Wright, were elected to audit the accounts for the past year. Mr. Ralph Wright, of Wandsworth, delivered his paper on "The need for a public library philosophy," which proved to be a very well-reasoned view of the profession and a sky-blue optimistic vision of its future possibilities. Mr. Wright certainly possesses a spiritual "Kruschen" feeling, and every one who heard his paper must have felt invigorated and refreshed by his unquenchable enthusiasm. A very spirited discussion followed, which was concluded with a vote of thanks to Mr. Wright, unanimously carried upon the motion of Mr. Bussey. The best thanks of all were heartily voted to Mr. Mould for his courtesy, kindness and hospitality.

The London Branch of the L.A.—The Council of the London and Home Counties Branch of the Library Association has elected Mr. H. Rowlatt, Borough Librarian of Poplar, as Chairman. Mr. Rowlatt took active interest in the proceedings which led to the formation of the Branch, and became Chairman of the Provisional Committee. The Chairmanship of the Council carries with it the Chairmanship of the Branch, and is likely to become an office of responsibility and importance. It will be a working office, requiring the devotion of a considerable amount of time to its duties, and it may be expected that Mr. Rowlatt will not neglect any of the calls that will be made upon him. He has been nominated as a candidate for the forthcoming Library Association Council election.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS.*

By W. H. PARKER, *Hackney Public Libraries*.

I must say, in the first place, how much I appreciate the honour you have done me in my appointment to the Presidency of this Association. When I consider the type of man and woman who have preceded me, and that I am part of a chain bearing worthy traditions handed down since 1895, I naturally feel somewhat diffident in taking office. When you recall the names of some of those who have held office I am sure you will understand my feeling of diffidence in being

* Delivered at Shoreditch, 20th June, 1923.

called into such a goodly company. However, I can assure you that it will be my constant endeavour to fill this high position that I may give it up to my successor with its condition untarnished during my year of office.

My predecessor took as the text of his admirable address this somewhat pessimistic note : *The position of our profession is lamentably unsatisfactory.* I, on the other hand, intend to speak for a moment to this effect : Our Association, which you will agree is a synonymous term for the profession itself, is in an excellent condition and is fast coming into its own. As Mr. Wickens mentioned last year, it appears to be the bounden duty for an incoming president to review the position of his profession at the moment of his taking office, to mention any obstacle to success which exists at the moment, and to endeavour to suggest a means by which this bad state of affairs may be remedied.

Never in the history of our Association have we been in so healthy and prosperous a condition : our numbers are greater than ever before, our meetings have never been better attended, discussions have never been so keen, nor has enthusiasm been so warm. The morning press inserts articles, complimentary or otherwise, concerning us ; while the evening ones sparkle at our expense with a heavy and sombre wit. How has this satisfactory state of affairs been brought about ? I will venture to supply brief answers to that question.

(1) By the unselfish efforts and untiring enthusiasm of the members of the Council and its officials. It would be invidious to mention any persons by name or even by office, although that could be done without a great strain on one's imagination. Although I have been a member of the Council for many years, I am unable to call to mind any previous Council which has been more distinguished for its unity of purpose, hard work and business acumen as the Council for 1922-1923. As an instance of the latter trait I would point to the success of our efforts connected with Mr. Thomas Aldred's useful little book : "Sequel Stories." I would emphasise the fact that the laborious work connected with its publication, the circularising of libraries and booksellers both at home and abroad, has been carried out in its entirety by members of the Council. This work of love has resulted in a sum of no less than £55 10s. being added to the Benevolent and Orphan Fund of the Association to date ! Has any other professional association made such a profit by the sale of one of its publications ? I trow not, nor yet anywhere approaching that amount.

(2) I think the second reason for our satisfactory position can be found in the fact that at long last assistants are awakening to the realisation that the Association means something more to them beyond taking their subscriptions and sending the Journal. Friendly intercourse between kindred spirits is beginning to tell, and is resulting in benefit to the individual and to the Association.

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(8) Thirdly, the ever-increasing excellence of the Journal. This fact is so patent to all who have studied the Journal during the last six months that I need say little under this head.

I now come to my Address proper, which takes as its theme : PERSONALITY AS A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION IN OUR WORK. Charles Dickens said in a letter to his sister in 1838 these words, which I think we might be allowed to apply to ourselves : " It appears to me the doing what little we can to increase the general stock of knowledge is as respectable an object in life as one can in any likelihood pursue." We are a body of workers in a field which offers as wide a scope for usefulness as may be found in any other calling ; and I venture further to say that in no other field of human endeavour is there a more earnest desire to do good for the community than will be found in those engaged in library work. It should be realised more often that the assistant who spends most of his time in doing the routine-work of a library : pasting in labels, cutting pages, putting books in their correct order, and so on, is doing his or her bit in the important work connected with keeping the machinery of the library in good running order. Perfection in any branch of workmanship is by far the most satisfactory and certain road to advancement in that special line, and I would suggest that some sort of deficiency in one's self is the cause that one has not advanced further in the profession. " The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings," says Shakespeare.

ACCESSIBILITY.—Someone has said : " Be as accessible as a public-house." I would not dare to make such a statement as that, but I would urge that we adopt more of the shop assistant's manner so far as cheerfulness and a desire to please are concerned. We can do a considerable amount of good by talking to people, but naturally we must have *something* to talk about. We must be able to talk about Shakespeare and Shaw, Edmund Spenser and Mark Twain, Robert Browning and Ella Wheeler Willcox, Thomas Hardy and Marie Corelli. Being pleasant and good-natured to all is really the first and foremost condition of our job. The air of Welcome need not be on the mat only, but should permeate the inside of the building. Make people feel at home in our libraries ; away with that formality and stiffness so common to many of the people's institutions.

The old type of librarian is dying out, thank goodness. I can remember his kind well : so full of dignity and self-importance that the ordinary stranger was quite afraid to address him, while young people were permitted to gaze on him from a distance only. Cheerful giving of our best should be our main concern, and every assistant should be imbued with this spirit ; not only those high up in the profession, but we, of the rank and file, are the ones to show real friendliness to all. A library is judged in a great degree by those who

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create the atmosphere of the place—that is, very considerably, by the assistant at the counter—whether it invites or repels the stranger. Many users of libraries are not only entirely devoid of scholarly instinct, but they need a living medium to put them into touch with the printed page. It is often given to the assistant who receives or issues the books to be that medium through his patient effort to please, the happy and opportune suggestion of a fascinating book, persevering aid in the search for an elusive bit of information, even the slight encouragement of a smile. These, I say, are the subtle influences which go a long way towards persuading our readers to understand and appreciate their libraries.

I have heard people say that it is a waste of good material for an educated or cultured assistant to do counter work. Never was a more false hypothesis enunciated. Some years ago the Chairman of a meeting held by, I think, our Yorkshire Division asked: "Why should not the public be served from the library counter by an M.A.?" If my memory serves me well the only reply he got to his pertinent question was his own echo, which sounded like "eh?" I would suggest that, provided he is accessible and not swollen unduly with a sense of his own importance, an M.A. would be eminently suitable for counter-service.

CHEERFULNESS.—Lord Beaconsfield said that in these islands, washed by a melancholy ocean, laughter was a real necessity. The library assistant, right from the awe-inspiring Deputy to the Junior, is, as a type, a most estimable person, full of enthusiasm and revelling in his life-work and living for that and that only. We, as a body, are in danger of getting to think that nothing matters but Certificates, Competence, and Culture. These are excellent things indeed, and I should be the last person to decry them in the slightest degree, but it must be recognised that they are not the *only* things of importance. I would plead for more of the milk of human kindness, mingled with dashes of Character, Cheerfulness and Companionship. I was once present when some half-dozen candidates were waiting to be interviewed concerning an appointment. One of these men, instead of discussing future appointments with his friends and acquaintances in the library world—an ever-green topic with us—was engaged in improving the shining hour by studying a certain text-book in preparation for his next professional examination. Undoubtedly he will get on, but what a bore and a nuisance he will prove to his friends, while as for his wife—should he be able to persuade any unfortunate girl to yoke her life to his—she, like old soldiers, will gradually fade away!

I have heard people complain that some assistants think more of flowers in the staff-room than of certificates on their walls, and more of their personal appearance than of their mental attributes. The

assistant who spends thought and money on beautifying the staff-room with flowers and fancy drapery instead of besmirching it with tobacco-smoke is likely to prove a far from unsatisfactory worker in a library. Pride in one's appearance, more especially in the fair sex, is surely rather a touch of virtue than a vice in persons who have to deal directly with, and please, the public. Someone might well say that assistants cannot be expected to appear always smart and cheerful on the inadequate salaries which still appertain in many districts ; but an improvement is taking place in that direction and we may hope for a more marked advance in the future. In any case we shall have the satisfaction of knowing that, by putting our best into all we undertake, we are earning a considerable salary even if we are not fortunate enough to receive it.

LACK OF HUMOUR.—Again, I would plead for a touch of that humour which makes all the world kin, and in which I think we are somewhat lacking. Nature herself displays everywhere a quaint sense of humour if we will only open our eyes to it : observe the fat face and wee mouth of the dog-fish ; the peevish mouth and fallen eye of the plaice ; the solemn expression and foolish dignity of the parrot ; the puffed-out paunch of the cock turkey, swelling with pride over nothing ; and the long trunk and insignificant tail of the elephant. If nature is so full of such a playful humour, surely it is not meant that we should be so dreadfully serious.

On the other hand, I know that there is nothing which makes life so enjoyable for one's self as being in real earnest ; not to the laughter-loving and humorous type of person is the good time in life, because although he may skip like a young sheep on the pleasant high pastures of merriment for a time, too often he descends with a terrific thud to the gloomy valleys of dreariness. But the man who is in earnest has no time for either merriment or dreariness, and so is apt to get a little tiresome to less fortunate persons who are unable to enter into his special pursuit. Had he the touch of humour of which I have spoken it would be impossible for him to appear heavy, superior, or ridiculous ; but he would always bear in mind that he must be ready to make excuses for another's weakness and ever realise that a wearisome questioner may not have had his own chances in life. To be gracious and courteous to all comers should be our interest as well as our duty. A vast amount of patience is at times required with the ignorant, but that looking down from the superior height of our own intelligence is surely out of place. We all know the man, aggressive and over-bearing, who comes into the library as though the whole place, including the staff, is his personal property. Now our man of cheerfulness and humour is at his best, and if anyone can deal with him efficiently and tactfully he and he *only* can do so.

OURSELVES AGAIN.—To return to the practical affairs of the Association, I stated earlier that we are in a thoroughly sound condition, but I would urge that we must not think of resting on our oars. Our membership, as the Annual Report tells you, is 664. Not only do I hope and trust, but I confidently expect that during the ensuing year we shall reach the four-figure water-mark. If everyone here will only enlist three assistants into our ranks, the requisite 886 will be easily obtained.

As has been well stated in the Journal, our Association is the only purely professional body formed in the interests of librarians, and is accordingly enabled to give every attention to those engaged in library work. Therefore it is the duty of every assistant in the British Isles to join the A.A.L., as numbers and unity give power.

THE DIVISIONS.

NORTH-EASTERN DIVISION.

The second annual excursion was carried out on Wednesday, June 6th. Durham was again selected, not only because under present conditions it was most accessible, but also because one visit had not exhausted all its places of interest.

The chief item on our programme was a visit to the Cathedral Library. This library proved to be of almost boundless interest, and taken together with the University Library, visited last year, provides the book lover with a very happy time. The Rev. Canon Hughes, librarian, had met our request for permission to visit in the most accommodating spirit and then honoured us by attending himself to show and explain his treasures. These were numerous, and it is doubtful if at any one of our meetings we have seen and handled so many remarkable manuscripts and books. The thanks given to Canon Hughes were very sincere.

Before meeting at the Cathedral Library the party was conducted over the Castle, where a group photograph was taken.

Twenty-eight members and friends gathered together for tea; and then a general dispersal followed, the evening being spent according to inclination.

SOUTH COAST DIVISION.

Programme of the Annual Meeting to be held at Portsmouth, Wednesday, July 11th, 1923.

- 1.30 p.m. Meet at the Dockyard Gates, The Hard, for tour of the Dockyard, H.M.S. Victory, etc.
- 5.15 p.m. Tea by kind invitation of Mr. James Hutt, M.A., Chief Librarian, Portsmouth, and Hon. President of the South Coast Division.
- 6.0 p.m. Committee Meeting at the Carnegie Branch Library, Fratton Road.
- 6.30 p.m. Annual Meeting, Carnegie Branch.

The Brighton contingent will leave Brighton at 10.0 a.m., arriving at Portsmouth Town shortly after 11.0 a.m.

E. MALE, *Hon. Secretary.*

OUR ASSOCIATION, OUR LIBRARIES, OURSELVES.

By HORACE GOULDEN, F.L.A., *Huddersfield Public Libraries.*
(Continued from page 272).

Perhaps the theory that in these days we are all evolutionists may be accepted with hesitancy, but this is possibly the outcome of the fact that biological changes take place so slowly that no one has ever actually seen such a process. Nevertheless, we know that very radical changes have taken place. Very similar things have happened with books. Books are simply worshipped as books by those who have not realised that they are merely tools by which the attainment of higher things is made possible. The interchange of books, a process sometimes viewed as of recent inception, existed in the days of manuscripts; for in library history we have several cases, even as far back as the fourteenth century, of manuscripts being lent to scholars of different countries. When we view these early interchanges of valuable manuscripts, lent under conditions that no modern insurance company would tolerate, it is somewhat alarming that so many restrictions and safeguards govern the use of the modern book.

The creation and development of readers will only obtain if the spirit of helpfulness and sympathy is ever present. It would be most unfortunate if there should ever be ground for suspicion on the part of any member of the public that the library was not primarily established and administered for its good.

It is, after all, that *subtle something* which is present, but which it is difficult to describe, which makes all the difference in utility. It is not the building, it is not necessarily the books; but it is the spirit behind the service bringing out the worth in the books and which unconsciously places a reader at his ease.

The service therefore reflects upon the library; and if the public's demand is not met—then libraries may be looked upon by the public as being unable to perform that which is undoubtedly their function; and the danger is that one unsatisfied, or neglected reader, can do much to detract from the good name that a public institution should possess, in spite of the other ninety-nine's laudations.

I remember that one of the first injunctions I received upon taking up my duties as a junior assistant was this: "Never tell a reader or searcher that the library does *not* possess information for which he is seeking." As a junior I thought that this was exceedingly ambitious, but experience teaches one that such a claim is not an over-estimate.

Search, and search again, until you attain your quest, or if this should prove impossible, until you have displayed to your client, and he has appreciated the fact, that your keenness to assist him is genuine.

Above all don't allow readers to meander around as though in a maze, or in an attempt to solve an intricate puzzle. We are all familiar with the type to which I allude. He comes to our libraries, commences looking at the shelves generally nearest the door, moves to another position, perhaps receives a mental shock, and is really simply hungering for guidance.

You must remember, too, in this connection that although our libraries are "old"—and by old I mean have been established for a number of years—many of our users are comparatively "new."

Life, both in the natural and the communal sense, is always on the change; and the public in consequence is a changing quantity. This changing quantity must be very carefully studied and assisted; it is our bounden duty. It is we who should, by our professional knowledge and personal ability, dispense that knowledge for the benefit of others and for the general good of the community.

To illustrate further the point, I will read to you an extract from a speech made by Viscount Bryce. He said:

"I have so constantly found myself in difficulties to know what are the best books on a subject, and when I have gone to the librarian, I have always found that he was not only willing, but positively zealous to do all he could for me. One of the best justifications for the existence of libraries is that they provide a librarian, and I have found that the greatest possible help will come to people who will go to the librarian and ask him what are the books that are most valued. It is not easy to keep pace with the mass of literature which comes out in our time, but, of course, the librarian makes it his special business to do so, and he very soon acquires the power of rapid tasting, which enables him to be a very trustworthy guide."

Books are related and interrelated in such a way that the librarian must of necessity acquaint himself with these relations so as to perform his vital functions.

When prominent persons give us such a brilliant advertisement, the public, attaching their interest to the occasion, partly because of the standing of the person quoted, and possibly through some personal curiosity or genuine need, feels that books have a mission for them.

In the earlier portion of my paper I have spoken of ourselves in the collective sense, and now I wish to be individual.

Taking it for granted that our libraries are up to the standard outlined, we may partly liken them to a machine, and assistants.

as the controlling levers. I say partly, because the controlling levers to a machine have one or more definite and unchanging functions to perform; they set into motion certain sequences of fixed and intended events. Now an assistant does not in entirety represent a controlling lever; a controlling lever is purely a mechanical entity, a characteristic to be avoided, particularly in a library assistant. If he or she becomes merely a mechanical unit, a succession of subconscious actions, monotony intervenes; and what is worse, true development of self is prevented.

To carry the theme further what do we see? Those around become infected, and the inevitable happens: a half-hearted effort giving poor results.

Each of us is in honour bound, required to give of his best, a whole-hearted effort towards the attainment of perfection.

You no doubt will have gathered by these few remarks that what I desire to see is a great display of initiative.

Initiative is a thing that should be developed in ordinary work as well as in intricate research work. You have a task before you; it is full of details and complicated. The solution appears difficult, perhaps insolvable, but the royal road is to think, think again, and when the whole is clearly focussed, act.

Perhaps I may be pardoned for introducing an old topic,—one too which is often disparaged in some quarters, of professional training. I do not propose, however, to deal with the subject at any length, as I feel that a future excellent paper may be fittingly given by some member. Nevertheless, the encouragement of professional education is part of the aim of our association, and as a consequence is a thing with an individual appeal. A *live* assistant should see to it that he or she endeavours to keep abreast with the move of events in this direction, and if you feel up-to-date but do not already possess certificates, my advice to you is to get that "up-to-dateness" placed upon parchment.

Just another word, and to those who as yet have taken no examination. After December, 1923, the Preliminary Examination of the Library Association will no longer be held, but its place will be taken by much stiffer requirements in the shape of:

The School Certificate Examination,
Oxford Responsions,
Matriculation,
and others of a similar standard.

My advise in this matter is perhaps best summed up thus: *Of two evils choose the lesser*—get the preliminary over before December next.

In conclusion I appeal to you to have a broad outlook—to create a living fellowship amongst ourselves, so that we may have an association, and through it a band of earnest workers worthy of our calling.

Libraries and Social Service.—The arrangers of the recent joint Conference of Branch Library Associations are to be congratulated on the excellent fare they provided. Two of the addresses in particular are of the greatest interest, and we therefore give them some prominence here. Mr. G. T. Shaw spoke of the importance of public library work, and the necessity for its development. At the present moment few realised the whole nature of the work that our public libraries were doing. The majority of people, he feared, took the view that induced Parliament to pass Ewart's Act, and regarded libraries as counter-attractions to the public-house, and shelters from the stormy blast for homeless wanderers. In other words, as a branch of social work. The popular idea, that public libraries were intended only for the poor, had been diminishing for some time, but since the War large numbers of people who formerly subscribed to private libraries have discovered the merits and advantages of public libraries. In the larger towns this snobbishness was never so prominently displayed towards the reference libraries. The effects of education and the developments of our cities and towns were all affecting their work and forcing public libraries to greater specialisation. At the present time, and in all periods of trade depression, public reference libraries were often the resort of a large number of men who were seeking warmth and shelter, and who, therefore, took places that were required for those people who were seeking information that they wished to apply in their daily work. The libraries were intended for library work—the use of books—and the use of libraries as shelters was not library work, but social work, and as such should be specially catered for. This particular form of social work could be most efficiently undertaken by public library committees, and if treated on right lines had great possibilities. It would cost money, and the money would be forthcoming only when the necessity and the possibilities of the work had been realised by those who controlled the public purse. In all large towns there were many men at all times unemployed, with no homes in which they could remain during the day, who had no money, and who, therefore, could not resort to the public-house, and who found their warmth and shelter in our libraries. He thought that each town should provide suitable accommodation for such men and women. The rooms should be open from early morning until late at night. There should be newspapers and magazines, and a suitable selection of books, and provision should be made for conversation. He would also allow smoking. This would provide much-needed

accommodation for the large number who needed it, and did not want libraries as libraries, while it would leave our libraries free to all who wished to use them for the purpose for which they were intended. Nobody would be shut out of the public library. No one could pass through the slum areas without being impressed by the aimlessness of the people standing about the streets. Surely our library work could be adapted to provide these people with intelligent occupation. Such rooms, being maintained out of the rates, would be free from all taint of propaganda and charity, and the people could feel that they were using their own buildings. He spoke of this subject after some experience. They had in one of the poor districts of Liverpool a reading-room open in the evenings, to which was added a room where men could smoke. The rooms were crowded very evening. He was advocating a development of this work. He did not think that by the means he suggested they would transform slum dwellers into scholars, but he did think that such rooms as he had described, directed by tactful managers, would have an elevating effect in the districts generally, and help the most intelligent to use the greater privileges our libraries provided. Great efforts were being made to abolish "slumdom" by means of re-housing schemes and improved sanitary conditions. Other forces were needed, and Library Committees must bear their share of this important social work. They could not ignore it—it forced itself on to them in a most inconvenient, not to say objectionable, manner. The slum dwellers were nearly all voters, and every effort to educate the democracy should be encouraged.

An interesting and well-reasoned paper on "Libraries and Adult Education," was read later by Mr. L. Stanley Jast.

Mr. Jast, in the course of his address, quoted Lord Haldane's words, "The end and aim of education is the Catholic mind." That mind, said Mr. Jast, was the result of large and varied experience and, to quote Lord Haldane again, "so far as it is capable of being created at all, can only come from experience." The possibility of experience in the world, for most of us, was extremely limited. Books offered to us a field of experience far transcending in variety and scope that experience which was available in action. One read a book negatively or positively, just as one might live negatively or positively. If one read positively, the reading would be a real experience, for one would put oneself into it. The experience was always wholly personal and took place inside us, and it did not matter whether we were re-acting to a picture on the screen of life or to a picture on the screen of the imagination. Both were shadows, but we were real—to ourselves at least. Whatever we felt, argued Mr. Jast, happened. Imagination was the only actor. Reading was at least important as living, because life could not be understood in and through itself. The main feeders of our imagination in these days were books, which formed the most

potent and most widely-spread agency for the upbuilding of a sympathy for and understanding of the minds of our fellow men. That sympathy and understanding, in the days to be, would not only transcend the boundaries of nations, but also would sunder the prison bars of temperament.

It is hoped that Mr. Jast's paper will be published.

APPOINTMENTS AND CHANGES.

G. M. BLAND, librarian, Newton-in-Makerfield, to be second sub-librarian, Chelsea (salary £200 + £113 bonus).

*FRANCIS S. ENGALL, St. Pancras, to be an assistant, Fulham. (Salary £100 + £47 12s. bonus.)

DUNCAN GRAY, county librarian, Warwickshire, to be the first borough librarian, St. Marylebone. Salary £400.

*STANLEY WHITE, assistant, Wilts County Libraries, to be assistant librarian, Middlesex County Libraries.

* Member A.A.L.

LIBRARIAN EXCHANGE BETWEEN NEW ZEALAND AND CANADA.

Arrangements have been completed whereby the first exchange of librarians within the British Empire will be consummated. The Public Library Board of Toronto is granting leave of absence to Miss Elizabeth Moir, Associate Head of the Reference Library, who, on the invitation of the Public Library Board of Auckland, New Zealand, will leave in August to take a position in that Library for six months. A cable message stated that Miss Ballantyne, of Auckland, will sail on July 11th, to remain with the Toronto Public Library for the same length of time. Library exchange has often taken place within a country, and especially in the United States, but this is the first time it has happened between the parts of the Empire. It will be remembered that we have discussed the possibility of such exchanges more than once. Perhaps this will create a precedent that some British libraries might follow up.

As we go to press we learn that Mr. Alexander Grant, of Messrs. McVitie and Price, has generously offered £100,000 as a permanent endowment for the proposed Scottish National Library. It will now be possible for the Government to accept the offer of the Faculty of Advocates to hand over their historic library for national purposes.